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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7734th meeting
Friday, 8 July 2016, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (S/2016/565)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (S/2016/565)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and His Excellency Mr. Omar Hilale, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Morocco.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/565, which contains the special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Ladsous, Mr. Hilale and His Excellency Mr. Volodymyr Yelchenko, Permanent Representative of Ukraine, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): I shall introduce the special report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2016/565), which is based largely on the recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and elaborated in close cooperation with the authorities of the Central African Republic and partners. The report presents recommendations regarding capacity, as the Council has requested, such that the Mission will have the required configuration and capacity to fulfil its tasks in a post-transitional environment, while incorporating peacebuilding objectives.

As the Council recalls, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was established in April 2014 at a time of great difficulties in the country. We must acknowledge that considerable progress has been made since then, particularly with the support of the Economic Community of Central African States, countries of the region and the deployment of international forces, including MINUSCA.

Earlier this year, after nearly two years of political transition, voters in the Central African Republic took to the ballot box in a peaceful and democratic environment. As I stated at the time, the Central African Republic provided a good example in a region of the world where few elections take place without a predetermined outcome, preparations are sometimes chaotic and the outcome is contested. However, in the Central African Republic elections took place in a perfectly proper manner and those who lost conceded defeat. It was therefore an exemplary election process and that must be highlighted. The election of President Faustin Archange Touadera — who is often called a man of the people — and the creation of a new Government launched a period of heightened expectations of lasting and positive change.

While we acknowledge the gains achieved during the positive transition, the strategic review that has been undertaken confirms that the Central African Republic still faces many serious challenges. The security situation remains fragile and, despite everything, can be reversed. State capacity is very low and sometimes non-existent. Many areas of the country are affected by persistent division, exclusion and marginalization. The people continue to suffer a very low level of economic development. There is almost no access to basic services and there are no representative, professional or inclusive security services to ensure minimally acceptable conditions. Moreover, armed groups maintain control over vast areas of the national territory and pose a significant threat to civilians. Their capacity to stire unrest and impede economic development and freedom of movement remains very much a reality.

Against that background, the strategic review makes a number of recommendations. The absolute priority, as always, is the protection of civilians and

facilitating the creation of a secure environment to ensure both the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons under proper conditions. These remain MINUSCA's absolute priorities.

In parallel and to prevent a relapse into conflict, the review recommends that the strategic goal for the coming two to three years be to support the sustainable reduction of the presence of armed groups. By focusing on that objective and prioritizing the activities necessary to achieve that goal, it is clear that MINUSCA could contribute to creating a more secure environment for civilians; assisting in the development of Government structures that are responsive to public opinion and able to deliver the basic services the people expect; and creating an inclusive political environment favourable to the protection of human rights, efforts to combat impunity and the expansion of the rule of law, with a view to strengthening reconciliation and social and economic development.

It is this need for visibility that has prompted the Secretary-General to recommend that the Security Council extend MINUSCA's mandate by 18 months at the authorized level, with no change in terms of military and police personnel.

The report presents a flexible, three-pronged approach to implement the strategic objective, in the context of the process under consideration and in line with requirements. The Mission will focus as a priority on addressing the presence of armed groups through a comprehensive approach, supporting the ongoing dialogue with the armed groups that has been initiated by President Touadera, based on his established agenda, and taking specific steps in support of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, the programme to reduce intercommunal violence, and the coordination of international support for security sector reform. Special importance will be attached to cooperation with the European Union training mission that is currently being put together to train the armed forces of the Central African Republic. Moreover, we must actively participate in the reform and training of the police and gendarmerie, in full compliance with the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.

Furthermore, the strategic review recommends and President Touadera requests the continuation of the urgent temporary measures mandate, which the country's current situation clearly requires. We must pursue the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court. Many people have been arrested and imprisonned, but it is important now that they be tried. I believe that will send the best message to the people of the Central African Republic that the issue of impunity, which has been a persistent source of the resurgence of crises over the years, is finally settled. Enough is enough — it is over. There will be no more impunity. That is one of the strongest message that the international community can send to the troublemakers. Furthermore, we will obviously continue to deploy additional capabilities and new technologies within the framework of existing resources and military personnel, and to strenthgen the military component to facilitate greater flexibility and mobility.

MINUSCA cannot carry do all this by itself. What we do is to support the efforts of the Government and in partnership with our Central African friends, as well as with the principal actors in the region and the world. That is where we will have to exercise our best judgement in discerning the comparative advantages offered by all involved. That is critical. In that context, I welcome the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to develop with us what I have called a compact or framework of mutual accountability, which should be endorsed by the national and international partners as a platform for the coordination of international efforts on the basis of a set of mutually agreed priorities that will continue to be developed so as to advance the humanitarian agenda and reconstruction, in view of the international donors and investors conference, which will be a crucial event, to take place in Brussels in November.

In the context of recent events, unfortunately, over the past several weeks there have been indications of less than positive developments. For example, on 19 June, six Central African police officers were detained for six days by a local self-defence group in PK5/ Bangui. There have been concerning reports of renewed efforts to unite ex-Séléka elements under the leadership of Nourredine Adam. Ali Darassa has been active in Bambari. Seasonal transhumance movements have provoked friction and clashes. In short, I shall not go into detail, but a number of people have been killed and some 35,000 people displaced in recent days. In fact, the leaders whose names I have mentioned are trying to test the Central African Government and the

United Nations, and it is therefore now more important than ever to show that we are proactive and will react.

Alarmingly, there have been reports of the abusive treatment of Muslims in the capital. In Berbérati and elsewhere, people have been prevented from returning to their homes by the anti-Balaka, and the humanitarian situation remains worrisome. Of a population of a little less than 5 million, a large part continues to be affected by the consequences of the conflict and a lack of access to social services. Half of the population is in a situation of relative food insecurity and in need of humanitarian assistance to survive. I recall that 20 per cent of the population is displaced and that two-thirds of the total population of the country have no access to basic medical care.

All of this creates a complex situation. In May, a total of 26 security incidents affected the operations of governmental and non-governmental organizations, which is a very clear warning. On 24 June, a Senegalese policeman was killed in circumstances on which we are trying to shed all possible light. It was unacceptable. I personally gave instructions to MINUSCA, in liaison with the Central African Government, to find out what happened, who is responsible and to make arrests if necessary. All of this is regrettable and worrisome.

We must not paint too bleak a picture, but we are nevertheless reminded that the situation in the Central African Republic remains fragile. Outstanding progress has been made over the past two years, but we must not risk having those gains reversed. It is therefore more important than ever that the authorities remain firmly committed to inclusive and transparent governance and to addressing the root causes of the crisis.

I believe that there are also positive signs. The President has assembled his Cabinet by including representatives from each of the prefectures of the country. He has also extended a hand to the armed groups, but that hand must be grasped and the gesture must be reciprocated. I believe that the President very clearly intends to break with the past. Once again, inclusivity and reconciliation are very important. We must recognize that there is no quick fix. The problems are too profound for that to be realistic, given the fleeting nature of the attention that the international community focused on the Central African Republic in the past. Intense attention lasted for a relatively brief period, and then we moved on to other things.

I believe that it would be a serious mistake to repeat that. We must make it clear to the current leadership that our efforts must be aimed at continuity and long-term results. As I have said on several occasions in Bangui, MINUSCA must be the final United Nations peacekeeping operation in the country. We do not have the luxury of making a mistake. We must maintain our commitment, ensure that it works, and avoid any reason to return as we have done repeatedly in the past, after three, five or seven years. That would be a collective and catastrophic failure and the loss of a major opportunity for the Central African people, who are in need of a solution. Once again, I believe that long-term commitment to maintaining political resolve is absolutely essential.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hilale.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin my statement by congratulating Japan on its ascension to the presidency of the Security Council and by thanking you, Sir, for your invitation. For me, it is always a pleasure and honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the of the Peacebuilding Commission in my capacity as Chair of the Central African Republic configuration.

I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, for his exhaustive briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic following the recent successful strategic review of the Mission's mandate, and take this opportunity to pay special tribute to him for his tireless efforts and high-level of cooperation with the Peacebuilding Commission. We believe that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/565) is comprehensive and take note of the proposed recommendations.

At the national level, less than six months after the presidential election the country is on the road to recovery and a wave of hope is spreading alongside that movement throughout the country. The President enjoys strong popular support, which needs to be maintained through international community support. Despite the many challenges that remain in the face of today's new political reality, we must recognize and emphasize that there are also new, unprecedent opportunities in the Central African Republic that we must build upon. An inclusive and transparent political process will be one of the main aspects needed to ensure that the entire

population is committed to facilitating the rebuilding of the social contract.

At the regional level, the Central African Republic's neighbours, which played a key role during the transition period, continue to play an important role in several areas, including migratory movements and the fight against the illicit trafficking that affects the region. In this regard, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa is well placed to coordinate efforts in the region. We encourage the neighbours of the Central African Republic and other countries of the region to continue to offer their full support to the new authorities through positive and constructive involvement.

Beyond the region, it is important to note the various initiatives undertaken by such partners as the United Nations system, through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the World Bank, the European Union and several other bilateral partners. Based on the road map I outlined in my last briefing to the Security Council on this subject (see S/PV.7671), the Peacebuilding Commission will continue to focus on the consistency and coordination of the aforementioned actions, and we will continue to advocate for increased support from the international community.

I would like to turn now to what we see as key peacebuilding aspects that need to be addressed as a priority in the coming months. First, the security situation remains extremely volatile, and, as Mr. Ladsous mentioned, recent events in many parts of the country, coupled with the risk of worsening violence, are a reminder that the country is still not free from the possibility of relapse. Accordingly, the success of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration process and the regional security system will be key to a return to stability. We welcome the efforts made to address the security situation and prevent armed groups from challenging the country's democratization process. The President of the Republic has made a clear commitment to making the process a priority of his Government, and the international community's commitment will be needed to get there.

Secondly, the lack of national capacity is often cited as one of the major challenges to the country's development. We appeal to all Member States — be they in the region, on the African continent or in other parts of the world — to consider paying particular attention to the Central African Republic by providing opportunities through training or in the context of triangular or South-South cooperation programmes. Although the needs are urgent in many areas, it is never too late to start investing in capacity-building.

Thirdly, as we have stated on many occasions, there can be no peace without reconciliation and there can be no reconciliation without credible mechanisms for fighting impunity. I am very pleased that Mr. Ladsous also stressed this point, as it is fundamental to the political process. In this context, the capacity of the national judicial system and the establishment of the Special Criminal Court are of paramount importance. The creation of the Court is fraught with multiple challenges, including with respect to funding and the issue of protecting judges, witnesses and victims. However, the establishment of the Special Court is not only necessary for prosecuting cases of violent crime, but will also have a beneficial, catalysing effect on the country's judicial system. We urge the new authorities to accelerate the ongoing bureaucratic process towards ensuring a rapid implementation of this important mechanism. Strengthening the national capacity of the judiciary is of the utmost importance.

Fourthly, an assessment, recovery and peacebuilding mission comprised of representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank recently visited the Central African Republic at the same time as the strategic review mission that was in the country. The fact that these two missions were in the field concurrently and were able to coordinate some of their activities is a good example of the kind of coherence that is necessary for our common approach to addressing the pressing needs of the country.

Furthermore, we welcome the creation of an interministerial commission to develop a mutual accountability framework that would ensure national ownership of the process and provide both the international community and the Government with higher visibility. As stated in the Secretary-General's report before us today,

> "It is essential that the framework of mutual accountability and the national recovery and peacebuilding plan be part of an integrated and coherent package underpinned by a suitable and unified follow-up architecture adapted to

the realities of the Central African Republic" (*S/2016/565, para. 64*).

In this regard, we should heed the lessons learned from previous experience to ensure the commission's success. The country-specific configuration will work closely with key stakeholders to achieve this end. In the current context, we welcome the assessment of the budgetary forecasts regarding the various streams of funding to meet humanitarian, development, security and recovery needs, keeping in mind the importance of proper sequencing to the peacebuilding priorities of the country.

Fifthly, unfortunately, the humanitarian situation remains disastrous, with no signs of improvement. The annual humanitarian appeal has been consistently underfunded, reaching only about 15.4 per cent in 2016, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In this regard as well, the international community can and must do more — much more. In addition, the number of refugees and internally displaced people remains very high. We must not forget that the international community has a responsibility towards refugees who have fled their countries due to the severity of a crisis. We must work harder to provide them with an environment conducive to their return, which is imperative.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to ask all States Members of the United Nations to increase their support for the Central African Republic. I can never say it enough — the country is at a critical point in its history and will need our continued support to ensure a return to stability. The situation in Central African Republic is suffering as a result of a chronic passivity of the donor community, as 90 per cent of the aid comes from a handful of partners. We urgently need to expand the donor base, taking into account the fact that different types of support would be helpful.

With a legitimate Government to lead the country, and a Government that has a clear vision of the task assigned to it as set forth in the State policy document approved by the Parliament on 7 June, we have before us an opportunity to provide the population of the Central African Republic with the support it deserves and expects.

The President: I thank Mr. Hilale for his briefing.

I give the floor to Mr. Yelchenko.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I have the honour of briefing the Security Council today in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic. In my statement, I intend to reflect on my role as Chair, which I have played since January 2016, and in so doing to highlight the work of the Committee and the Panel of Experts since the start of the year.

There have been a number of developments in the Central African Republic that have had a direct impact on the work of the 2127 Committee, in particular the second round of presidential elections, new parliamentary elections that took place on 14 February, and run-off elections that took place on 31 March. The new Parliament, the election of President Touadera and the formation of a new Cabinet by the new President have heralded the start of a new chapter that holds great promise for the future of the Central African Republic.

It was against that backdrop that I visited the Central African Republic from 24 to 27 May. The timing of the visit was opportune, as it provided a welcome opportunity to engage with the newly elected and appointed authorities. I was accompanied by the French representative to the Committee, and members of the Panel of Experts also joined me in many of my meetings in Bangui and during the field trip to Bambari.

During our discussions with the authorities, we stressed that the Security Council continued to accord a great deal of importance to the situation in the Central African Republic. Our visit also served to reinforce the message that the Committee should be viewed as a partner of the Central African Republic, since we shared the same goal of promoting peace and security in the country and curbing the activities of spoilers. The need for strengthened collaboration among the authorities of the Central African Republic, the Committee and the Panel of Experts was therefore a central theme that resonated during the visit.

I also felt that the exchange of views with the local authorities during the field trip to Bambari, including with representatives of civil society such as the Akpe community of internally displaced persons, helped enrich my understanding of the situation on the ground and provided me with an opportunity to witness at first-hand the issues that the country faces. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretariat and to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African

Republic (MINUSCA), which provided me with full support in preparing and conducting the visit.

Following my visit, on 13 June I briefed the members of the Committee on the trip. Among the conclusions set out in the visit report concerning the way forward, I cited the need to encourage the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to continue efforts to ensure safe storage of weapons and ammunition in the entire country. I also asked the Secretariat to request MINUSCA Public Information Service to read out the text of the Committee's press releases on United Nations Radio, particularly as they related to sanctions designations. I encouraged Member States to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action and to earmark their contributions for weapons and ammunition management in the Central African Republic. I also set out a number of recommendations involving the dispatch of letters and a note verbale, the majority of which were agreed upon by the Committee and dispatched during the third week of June.

The visit also provided me with a timely opportunity to engage with the new Government on the nature and purpose of the sanctions measures, namely, the arms embargo, the travel ban and the assets freeze. Concerning the arms embargo, the Council may recall that, under the chairmanship of my predecessor, the Committee had been in continuous contact with the Central African Republic transitional authorities and regional States concerning the purpose and implementation of the embargo, and had in particular provided information on the relevant exemptions procedures.

I reiterated similar information to the members of the new Government with whom we met. I emphasized in particular that the embargo was intended to protect the people of the Central African Republic from armed groups determined to bring weapons and ammunition into the country. I further encouraged dialogue and discussions between the Government, the Panel and the Secretariat concerning the drafting and submission of embargo exemption requests to the Committee.

Along those lines, let me also note that the Committee has been actively working with the Panel of Experts and other stakeholders on the embargo. On 3 February, the Panel briefed the Committee on a progress update it had submitted in January. Among other things, the Panel touched upon the increased number of attacks by armed groups, especially the Lord's Resistance Army, which had been responsible for attacking and abducting civilians. The Panel further highlighted that security continued to be a major concern and a challenge, with armed groups controlling large areas of the country and continuing to operate illegal administrations that taxed and racketeered the population.

On 9 March, the Committee held a discussion via video teleconference with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, as well as UNMAS. Special Representative Onanga Anyanga informed members that the activities of armed groups continued to be a cause of concern in the country. He further noted that MINUSCA forces and police had reported having seized or recovered significant numbers of assault rifles, hand-made weapons and ammunition of various calibres, from armed groups and/or armed civilians.

The Special Representative also reported that the Mission had continued to receive information on suspected arms smuggling into the Central African Republic, especially reports of the trafficking of small arms, ammunition and military uniforms. MINUSCA had also interceded in attempts to smuggle, via road, ammunition destined for armed groups in the country. UNMAS further informed the members that, while significant efforts were being made to destroy weapons and tons of unserviceable ammunition, the country was still in need of adequate safe storage sites for weapons and ammunition.

On 29 April, the Committee met via video teleconference with the European Union regarding the establishment of the European Union training mission in the Central African Republic. The representatives of the European Union informed the members that the Government of the Central African Republic had been in contact with them and had requested assistance to help transform the Forces armées centrafricaines into a professional force. The European Union training mission for the Central African Republic therefore intends to work with the Forces armées centrafricaines in the areas of administration, command and organization, including operational training. The Mission also intends to support the preparation and implementation of the security sector reform of the armed forces. A key concern remains the vetting of the members of the Forces armées centrafricaines to be trained to ensure that elements previously involved in human rights abuses are not included in the training.

On 18 May, the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts provided an overview of the Panel's second progress update submitted to the Committee in 2016. The Panel highlighted that most armed groups had refused to collaborate with the newly elected President in terms of issues related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Some elements of the Forces armées centrafricaines had been engaged in racketeering local populations. Armed groups remained in control of security and taxation in many areas, and the national police, gendarmerie and customs authorities had reported exercising little to no effective authority. The Panel further reported concerns about arms smuggling and some armed groups having possession of assault rifles that were in better condition that those in the possession of other armed groups.

To date in 2016, the Committee has received a total of six requests for exemption from the arms embargo, of which five were approved. The Committee has also received three notifications concerning exemptions to the measures. Of those three, one was in relation to supporting the reform of the security sector in the Central African Republic, while the other two were in relation to the assets freeze.

Concerning the travel ban, the Committee has continued to engage with the regional States concerned, namely, Chad, Kenya and South Africa, via letters, advising them of the importance of ensuring that sanctioned individuals alleged to have travelled from or to their countries were impeded from doing so. The Panel has also actively been engaging with the States concerned and providing information to members on reported violations of the travel ban. The Committee continues to work on this matter and to ensure the effective implementation of the travel ban. If no feedback is forthcoming, I would suggest that the President of the Council and I endeavour to engage bilaterally with the States concerned, as was the case in December 2015 when my predecessor and the representative of the United States, then President of the Council, met with the representatives of Kenya and South Africa.

Concerning the asset freeze, during my trip to the Central African Republic, I raised an issue that the Panel had brought to the Committee's attention, namely, that a sanctioned individual, Mr. Alfred Yekatom, had been elected to the National Assembly of the Central African Republic and had been receiving monthly salary payments which, in the absence of an exemption request, constituted a violation of the assets freeze. With the Committee's agreement, I sent a letter on 21 June to the Ministry of Finance concerning Mr. Yekatom. During my visit, I outlined the relevant exemptions procedures to the assets freeze and underscored the importance of the authorities' cooperation with the Committee, the Panel and the Secretariat in that connection.

During the course of this year, the Committee has also been engaged on other issues of importance to the sanctions regime. In the lead-up to my visit to the Central African Republic, on 18 May the Committee met with representatives of the humanitarian community, namely, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict. The briefers highlighted the need for continued vigilance on human rights and humanitarian-related issues in the Central African Republic, where children continue to be recruited and used as fighters in armed groups, and acts of sexual violence continue to be perpetrated with the attackers going unpunished. Later this month, on 22 July, the Committee is scheduled to hear a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, who last briefed the Committee in May 2014.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that the sanctions measures continue to be relevant in the context of the Central African Republic. As Chair, I will make every effort to ensure that the Committee remains fully engaged, including by regularly updating its list of individuals and entities that meet the designation criteria for sanctions, and by considering new sanctions designations. I will also strive to ensure that the Panel of Experts receives the information that it requests from Member States, particularly the regional States and the relevant authorities of the Central African Republic, many of whom I met during the visit.

The President: I thank Ambassador Yelchenko for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.